

The Japanese View of Christianity

Liberal Judaism and its Future

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THE JAPANESE VIEW OF CHRISTIANITY.

DURING the Summer Session of this year the opportune publication of a Japanese treatise on the National "Bushido," or, Code of Knightly Honour, afforded us the means of acquainting ourselves with "the soul" of that remarkable people. Christianity, the religion of other-worldliness, dogmatic, supermundane and miraculous, suddenly found itself confronted with a religion which is its direct antithesis; a religion which is earth-born, man-centred, natural and intelligible, the worship of the moral ideal in its purity. And, as we saw, the advantage was not with Christianity. Judged by its own test, "By their fruits ye shall know them," it could claim no superiority over the Confucian Ethic that inspired the Bushido of Japan.

The significance of this discovery can hardly be exaggerated. Did a stranger from Mars descend upon this planet, we could not expect a more valuable, a more impartial, estimate of our religious institutions. It is not too much to say that the appearance of Japan on the world's stage provides us with a most valuable criterion whereby to judge our own position. Here

is a people who till yesterday lived in the mist, on the boundaries of the Unknown. What Britain was to the Republic of Rome—*penitus toto orbe divisa*—all but cut off from the world—that the islanders of Nippon were to Europe until the assertion of her mastery in Korea ten years ago announced the rise of a new star in the international constellation. Silently but exhaustively this wonderful people had been studying the soul of Western races, the source of their superiority in the arts of peace and war, the explanation of their prosperity and contentment. They spared no pains; they sent their Commissioners to every land, and the result of their recommendations is embodied in the new Japan that rose on the ruins of a feudal Empire, modern to its finger tips, equipped for self-defence and a progress in future like the leading nations of the world. The nature of the revolution that swept those Eastern islands can be imagined by all who remember the gradual development of our own Constitution. That half a century should have sufficed to change the immovable East into an embodied pattern of the strenuous life, is one of those miracles which even that wonder-worker, Man, has rarely, if ever, performed. But the significance of the change is emphasised in the selection of the materials for the upbuilding of their New Japan. An impulsive people, shaken by emotion, would have stopped at nothing. Once the ball was set rolling, it would have swept everything before it. Less than a century before them a European people embarked on political and

social revolution, and the excesses that accompanied their national redemption are a lasting stain on a magnificent achievement. Japan found her way to liberty, through bloodshed, indeed, but not butchery; and she never lost her hold on her national religion. There was no Goddess of Reason, vilely personified, in Tokyo, no Reign of Terror. All that was best in European or American civilization it frankly adopted, once the new spirit triumphed; but it left our religion severely alone. In their judgment, it had ceased to contribute anything, either to our material progress, our national spirit, the advancement of science, or the happiness and contentment of our people. In a word, its usefulness was exhausted; like war "almost all the good had gone out of it," so that where it was not actively hostile or harmful to national interests, it was valueless. I say, this quiet repudiation of Western religion by this young nation, without passion or prejudice, and solely on the experimental grounds recommended by Christ, "By their fruits ye shall know them," is deserving of our serious consideration. It was not motived by bigotry, for no country is so tolerant, in spite of its unfortunate experience of Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries in the seventeenth century. They revoked their edicts of expulsion, and all through the latter part of the nineteenth century, missionaries of every shade have enjoyed the hospitality of the country. The Christian Creed is no stranger in Japan, and if their personal experience had been at all favourable, the thoroughness of their revolutionary movement

would have involved its triumph in that of other Western institutions. But *that* has been the one exception: they have contented themselves with repeating Constantine's edict: *Christianam religionem profiteri liberum*—"Any man is free to adopt the Christian Religion"—and there the matter ends.

Our missionary societies have not been slow to profit by Japanese hospitality, and American, British and Russian emissaries and money have been despatched thither in abundance. Most sections and segments of Christendom are represented, it would appear, and their combined efforts, after half a century's work, have resulted in the proselytism of 130,000 souls, including children, who are shepherded by a force of missionaries, estimated by one of their body at 1,020, or about one evangelist to every 130 converts, including infants. When we read of East End vicars struggling with a parish of 60 or 70,000, with the assistance of two or three curates, it must be admitted the Japanese neophyte is carefully nursed.

But, numbers are by no means the most interesting feature of the situation. It appears that the Japanese, unlike Orientals, in this as in other respects, take but a languid interest in the speculative wrangles of the competing evangelists. In spite of the sectarian zeal of their instructors, they display a refreshing indifference to the theological minutiae which distinguish High Church from Broad Church, and both from Dissent and Catholicism. They pass, we are told, easily from one denomination to another; wherein we seem to

detect the influence of the soup kitchen and the medicine shop, the invariable accompaniments of modern proselytism. Free drugs and a "square meal" are powerful adjuncts to missionary enterprise, and here as in many other fields of human activity, the longest purse will probably win.

At the same time, we read in the newspapers—if newspapers are to be believed in these sensational times—that one or other Japanese of distinction, in Parliament or in the Services, has embraced Christianity in some form, and one wild scribe sent an astonishing story from Tokio, at the beginning of the war, that an influential public meeting had been held, and a resolution carried, foreshadowing the speedy adoption of Christianity as the national religion. The effect was, of course, electrical, and such was the ecclesiastical excitement that the Bishop of Japan felt bound to allay it by a telegram stating that there was no truth whatever in the report.

And it would, indeed, be a grievous thing to hear of that fine people surrendering the traditions that have made them a nation and extorted the admiration of mankind for the pitiable figments that do duty for religion here. The national apostacy from the high-souled teachings of the Bashido in favour of the Athanasian creed or a Spurgeonite Christianity ; or the metamorphosis of that sublime code of conduct into a sort of appendage to our fly-blown theology would be a calamity of the first magnitude, so great as to be unimaginable. We may, I think, be sure that if Japan

ever does adopt Western Religion, it will be upon their own terms. They will treat it as they have treated those other institutions they have seen fit to take up. In adopting, they have adapted them to their national requirements. As in naval, military, and political matters, they have pursued a wise eclecticism, choosing what they judged best, and always so adjusting the new to the old that no irreparable break with historic tradition should ensue. And, so, a recent author on religion in that country, speaks of Christianity as having been Japonicized. For instance, the innate refinement and courtesy of the Baptist converts will not tolerate the "close communion" dogma of that sect; they have an instinctive antipathy to the theological boycott, and, unlike the Jews of old, decline to "have no dealings with the Samaritans." The handful of Friends cannot instil their non-resistance doctrines into the soul of a valorous people, and the subtle distinctions between the infant and adult baptizers are quite lost on their practical minds. Converts of all shades of belief tend, we are told, to fraternize with one another, and enjoy social intercourse and co-operation for common ends. Thus their Christianity, so far as it is an exclusive, sectarian, and dogmatic institution, sits very lightly upon them. The Japanese who professes Shinto and Buddhism equally with the higher Ethic of the Confucian Bushido, experiences no difficulty in combining membership of the Peculiar People or the Latter Day Saints with loyalty to the national ideal of knightly conduct. Christianity to all who stand in no

need of gratuitous food and physic, is simply one more phase of speculative belief to which the man of detached mind may give partial adherence without detriment to his mental independence or moral integrity. And, this probably sums up at their true value the conversions of the past half century. The poor are interested on their material side, and the more educated are too tolerant and too courteous to turn a wholly deaf ear to the exhortations of amiable men and women, full of zeal and resources, but who, we may say it, without hesitation, would be very much better employed in reclaiming the wastrels and failures of their own creed at home.

We may now pass on to inquire what it is that disqualifies Christianity, in the eyes of the cultivated Japanese as a candidate for the honorable post of the national religion. Of the making of books on Japan, there is, at the present moment, no end. Some are by natives, and more are written by travellers, students, diplomatists, journalists and missionaries, and in them all, it may be said, copious reference is made to the religious question, so interested is humanity, and particularly British and American humanity, in that great phase of personal experience. It is to be feared that most foreign writers approach the subject with unconscious prejudice. They are not all Edwin Arnolds. Their sympathies are broad, but their intelligence is narrow. Not one I have met but has carried away from Japan the same sense of indefinable charm to which the English poet bore eloquent testimony. There are

features of Japanese social life repellent to the European, and an indifference to some of the *convenances* of life deemed by us indispensable to respectability ; yet we meet with few criticisms, and no harsh words of condemnation. The enthusiastic eulogies of the sixteenth century missionaries, like Xavier ; of travellers like Kaempffer and Lamairesse, are re-echoed by their successors ; they are ready to admit that "in sobriety, in personal dignity, in mutual respect and reciprocal benevolence, the mass of the people live above the moral level of the majority of Westerners" ; and yet, in spite of all, they argue that something is lacking, and you can easily guess what it is : the Nine and Thirty Articles, the Council of Trent, or the Free Church Programme, according to the theological colour of the critic. Most, however, are content with a general assertion that Japan, to be perfect, must be Christian, that "the rays of the Sun of Justice," as one flamboyant American phrases it, "must overshadow the light of the Rising Sun" ; while another of the same nationality feels "quite warranted in prophesying that within the twentieth century Japan will become practically a Christian nation."

Now, the Japanese' case against his religious critics is as simple as it is unanswerable. The "Sun of Justice," he points out, has, on your own admission, been shining over our happy land these many centuries. There is nothing in your moral code, recognized as of universal validity ; none of the aboriginal dictates of conscience, on which civilized life and an organized

State repose, which we have not long since possessed in our national Bushido and our Confucian religion. Your priests and travellers have been amongst us, and avow their conviction that in all the fruits of Righteousness we are not one whit behind themselves ; that in the charm and grace of intercourse, in the courtesy and refinement that distinguish our civilization, we are incontestably your superiors. You point to blots in our social life. But are there none in your own ? Surely your great prophet's words apply here : " Physician heal thyself." Woman is not adequately honoured amongst us, you say : a daughter will support her parents at the price of her own dishonour. We may admit the charge, but is that pitiful surrender of self in the cause of filial piety to be compared with that of the western woman, who sells herself or is sold, in a loveless union for the sake of gold ? Divorce is rife, you observe ; but is it worse than in America ; or is the marriage tie less lightly regarded than among the " fashionable adulterers " recently rebuked in the public Press of London ? If it is a question of scandal and laxity, the East will not suffer by comparison with the West ; and consequently the inability of your popular creed to hold men and women to their duty ; the indifference and even contempt so many display, not only for your theology but for your morals, offer us no inducement to dethrone our own religion in favour of yours.

Decidedly, with the controversy ringing in our ears, " Do we believe " ? or are we a nation of impostors,

the climax of arrogance and impudence does seem to be reached in the suggestion that our tumbling altars, our petty tribal gods—the teraphim of Rome or Canterbury—are an indispensable necessity to the new life of the Land of the Rising Sun. The missionaries may be forgiven; "they are as children in these matters." Such as they have not yet learnt the aboriginal supremacy of Reason and Conscience; that it is they who have made all gods and shall unmake them. But the men of light and leading know it in Japan, and their women, trained in the new Imperial University, will learn it too, and we may trust to them never to apostatize from the National Church of Ethical Religion. We need not attempt any competition in prophecy with the American missionary, but this much we may say, that such Christianity as Japan is likely to assimilate during this century will be borrowed wholly from the element which that Faith shares with all others—in which it has neither advantage nor monopoly—*its moral element*. What is true in it, it may take, for in substance it already possesses it; what is new in it, its creeds and definitions, impossible of verification, and a veritable breeding ground of strife and ill-feeling, it will instinctively discard. It is Christianity that will be reformed during this coming century, and on the lines of Confucian, or Ethical Religion. The developments now going on within all the Churches, at home and abroad, mean this or they mean nothing. They who can read the signs of the times know the Kingdom of Ethic is at hand.

So much the Japanese would reply in general, viz., that we have nothing to offer except a reproduction of the intellectual confusion and dishonesty which accompany Christianity in the advanced countries of the West. They point out, in the next place, that the *ethos* of Christianity is unsuited to their national temperament, and shrewdly argue that the masterful nations of the world only retain their faith by completely forgetting it in the practical management of their affairs. Look, for example, at the British Empire, built up by men who dutifully recited, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth," and recall the adventurers and dare-devils of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who carried our flag over every sea, and planted it irremovably in four Continents, and stray parts of the fifth. Think of India and Canada, wrested from France, and what we have taken from Spain and Holland, and ask how all that fits in with the solemnest words, indisputably spoken by Christ, "Blessed are the poor," "Blessed are the meek." Or, again, look at "Holy Russia," and her record of rapacity and deception in China; and at Germany, avenging the murder of Jesuits, too dangerous or disreputable for German soil, by annexing thousands of square miles of territory. The irony of it all is too subtle for the average Christian, but the Japanese sees it quickly enough, and appraises us accordingly as hypocrites or impostors, so steeped in dishonesty as to be unconscious of it. These are the people, he observes, who send us their surplus saints to teach

morality and common decency! Really, it calls for the unspeakable laughter of the Homeric gods.

The Japanese has learnt another theory of world-development, with nothing in common with the impossible *Sermon on the Mount*, which Dr. Magee shrewdly warned us would never do for modern consumption; and consequently there is no clash between his conscience and his patriotism. He does what he thinks right, trusts to his own right arm, and neither invokes Olympus nor thanks it for his successes. The popular gods of Japan are many, but their heaven of heavens is peopled by divinities of the silent sort, who never speak except in the whisperings of reason and conscience. They know no "immeasurable clergyman" in the skies, who has promulgated an imaginary revelation, and enforced an impossible code of morals, with absolutely no relevance to a world produced amid the storm and stress inevitable in evolution. They can't fit in our world-theory either with the facts of the Universe, or our conduct, and as honest men, they refrain from associating themselves with our creed or worship. Depend upon it, the future is going to bring us nearer to the Japanese than the Japanese nearer to us. It is said we are about to attach some of our officers to their regiments, that we may learn military science as understood by that efficient and thorough-going people. One day we may send our professors of Divinity, our Bampton lecturers, the corps of Christian Evidence apologists, *à hoc genus omne*, to the Tokio University to study the Bushido,

the ethical religion of Japan. The results should be not less fruitful and contributory to national efficiency. Common sense prevents any religious *rapprochement* on their side. When the inevitable movement begins, it must be on our own. They will supply the substance of religion in their unsurpassable Bushido, and we may infuse something of the sweetness and gentleness of the spirit of Christ, the solitary attractive element in the European Creed.

To the Japanese mind, therefore, Christianity appears as an impracticable ideal, destitute of inspiration in a work-a-day world. Its pessimism, its dejected attitude in presence of the imaginary wickedness of the world, its haunting sense of sin, culminating in its final triumph in an eternal hell, is its decisive disqualification in the eyes of a healthy, optimist, and essentially ambitious people. What our Archimandrites hold of vital importance, the early creeds, "the first six centuries" of Dean Wace, or "the historic Episcopate" of Dr. Benson, appear to the practical mind of our allies as the most pitiable of trivialities. They account them as the fads of a few, habitually disregarded by the strenuous and progressive amongst us, and practically abandoned by all when it comes to business ; when, for example, we have to fight our brother Boer, or provide ourselves with allies against possible combined aggression on the part of our enemies. What men of science think of Wallace apart from his phrenology, that the leading men of Japan think of us apart from popular Christianity. In spite of

all its incredibilities and impracticabilities, they know, that like themselves, we shall keep our word, and that when we are in earnest, in peace or in war, we forget all about it.

I end with some words, instinct with good sense and feeling, of Mr. Hitomi, the special delegate of the Formosa Government at the Paris Exhibition of 1900, and the correspondent of a leading Japanese paper. His work on the institutions and customs of his country, recently published in French, is one of singular interest, and, we may believe, more reliable than the publications of travellers and missionaries. Certainly, his attitude towards the religious question is far more judicial, and in his impartial repudiation of all supernaturalism, both native and Christian, he seems to forecast the veritable future of religion in his country. It will follow the lines we are endeavouring to lay down here. "Now-a-days," he says, "we have abandoned our attitude of hostility towards Christianity; from hatred we have passed to indifference. Moreover, in the eyes of the governing classes, religion is quite a secondary matter. What we regard as important is the preservation of the national morality, which inculcates love of country, loyalty to the Sovereign, filial piety, harmony in the family, respect for the aged, friendship among the young, and reverence for the dead. But such duties are moral not religious, and they are fulfilled with an object entirely associated with this earth, and by no means in view of a heavenly recompense.

"With all their ancestor-worship, the instructed Japanese are no longer Shintoist. They call in the bonzes to officiate at funerals, but they are not Buddhists. While recognizing some measure of supernaturalism as necessary for the populace, they are for themselves content with reason and the law of Conscience. And for this cause, religions, no matter what their character, can scarcely prosper as in other days, the foreigner's no more than our own. The Imperial Government has completely excluded religion from the sphere of public education. Monks and nuns can no longer teach their dogmas in our schools, and consequently lack the opportunity and the time to instil their tenets into the mind of the young. And thus, they encounter a formidable barrier to the progress of their faith. Nevertheless the considerable efforts of foreign missionaries have been rewarded by a certain amount of success, but it is questionable whether it is likely to continue. They may influence the ignorant, and get hold of a few enthusiasts, but they have no easy task with intelligent and unemotional people. Possibly, Christianity might spread with greater facility, if it took shape in a national Church, exempt from all external interference, and deriving its power and influence from the Emperor alone. An independent, Japanese Association of this character, might, as in some European countries, be capable of a certain measure of self-adjustment to the continual changes of time, and thus satisfy the demands of progress."

Apart from this, he sees no future for Western Religion. But what does his suggestion amount to? Nothing short of the evisceration of our popular creed; its subjection to civil control, and the abandonment of its absolute or final character. Under the irresistible influence of the Time-Spirit, speaking through the voice of Science and Experience, the new Japanese Christianity would gradually be merged into the national morality. Its dogmas would drop their historical character, and even God and Christ would become no more than the embodiment, or idealized personification, of the moral code. This process of disintegration the "faithful" find has already begun here, and they can only stop it by harking back to the first six centuries, or even the days of the Apostles, and desperately shouting anathema to every fresh change dictated by Science or Criticism. Thus Belief is only possible by tying themselves to a corpse, and living in the buried Past. It is the very last sacrifice we may expect from the new Japan, the pride and the hope of all who hold the Faith of Reason.

LIBERAL JUDAISM AND ITS FUTURE.

THE question of Hebrew Religion still possesses a commanding interest for the Western mind. It is no exaggeration to say that as philosophy, art and literature, are unthinkable apart from ancient Greece, so it is impossible to dissociate the religious sentiment from its traditional connection with Israel. It is not that the world owes the cardinal truths of morality or religion to Hebrew inventiveness ; of old, as to-day, their genius has never been of the creative order. Other peoples, like the Egyptians and Babylonians, preceded them in the religions, as in other departments of civilized existence. Indeed, of all the ancient races, they were the *last* to become acquainted with those commanding facts of conscience and reason on which organized society reposes ; but learning last, they learnt best, and it is an indisputable fact that they were the first, as a people, to profess that pure monotheism and the ethical service of the Deity, which for centuries before them had been the ideal of enlightened minds. It is the *form* they gave to religious belief and worship, amended and developed by the greatest genius they produced—the prophet of Nazara—that has determined the course of its subsequent development. The spiritual line, which links us to the pre-exilic teachers, to Amos, Hosea and Isaiah, through Jesus, is unbroken ; and even we, assembled here, who are anathema to our brethren, and accounted

profane persons because of our disbelief, are the genuine offspring of these four men, nearer, immeasurably nearer, to them than the hierarchs of Christendom in our conception of religion as justice, brotherhood and reverence ; " to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God," that is, to bear oneself reverently in the presence of incomprehensible things.

We do not pretend, of course, to have changed nothing : " walking humbly with our God " may mean something different to us and to the gentle Micah, who first uttered those sublime words. Our interpretation of the Ultimate Reality is not that of 2,600 years ago. Yet for us, as for these incomparable masters, that Reality exists ; but we think that other Jew, the saintly Spinoza, wiser when he tells us that God is All and All is God ; that the Omnipresent Unity leaves no possible room for distinctions.

Draw, if thou canst, the mystic line
Rightly severing His from thine ;
Which is human, which divine.

But we still " walk humbly with our God " ; our worship is of the silent sort, the sense of reverence that subdues the soul before the unspeakable mysteries that surround us. Our metaphysic may depersonalize the Infinite ; Jehovah may be resolved into the eternal process of the suns ; but still we are nearer to the great eighth century masters of Israel than they who insist on those external features of religion which prophets have uniformly despised.

In ancient Israel there was ever a conflict between these two ideals, the sacerdotal and the prophetic. Christ found it in full operation, and however unreliable

the gospels may be, they convey the distinct impression that he was inflexibly opposed to all formalism and ritual. No priest himself, a simple layman, and a peasant, like Amos, his spiritual ancestor, he was unquestionably the most sternly anti-sacerdotal prophet who ever lived, not excepting Gotama Buddha. His metamorphosis into a priest by the grotesque methods of that anonymous tractate, known as the Epistle to the Hebrews, and its subsequent adoption and enforcement by Christendom, is the most indefensible of all the liberties the Church has taken with his name. In that initial blunder, or crime, is involved the shameful story of the mental and moral calamities which Dogmatism has inflicted on the world. What we are attempting now, the Hebrew prophets undertook in the 8th century, B.C., the summary abolition of the temple ritual, with its sacrifices and mystery-men, and the substitution of religion "in spirit and in truth," as Christ described it, or in modern language, the "worship of the ideal in its purity." Turn to the preaching of these men in your Bibles, and you will see the burning indignation with which they witnessed the exploitation of the popular credulity by priests who offered to purchase Jehovah's favour for a sheep or a calf, or a brace of pigeons, much as our modern magicians undertake to forgive sins. Our language here may be direct and emphatic, but Isaiah and Amos put words into the mouth of the Deity himself, vehement and even violent in its denunciation of priestcraft and superstition beyond anything we employ against the entire organized system of religious imposture

which pretends that there is a Deity to be bought off with prayer or sacrifice ; that formulæ or incantations can mechanically influence the spiritual life, or improve a man's moral status.

The eighth century movement was an ethical movement, pure and simple, and with the exception of its theology, there is not one word of its teaching unsuitable to our own needs. Seeing things as I do now, I should be a proud man if I had been brought up a Jew in so noble a school as that, with morality (or religion), irradiated by the glory of the Spinoza philosophy, disclosing the Universe as the transient and imperfect manifestation of the One, showing all things *sub specie æternitatis*, in the tranquil and abiding light of the Everlasting.

Now the New Judaism, liberal Judaism, as it calls itself in the person of Mr. Montefiore, is moving in this direction. The reformation which is forcing itself on some of the younger and more accomplished members of that remarkable people is decidedly ethical in spirit : it aims at the re-assertion of Israel's claim to have first produced popular teachers who taught the religion of Morality, that God cannot otherwise be served than in the pure and upright life. They advocate the supersession of the "Law," as it is technically known to both Jew and Gentile, that is, the Code described at length in Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Numbers, which was compiled, not by Moses, but a thousand years after Moses, a century and more after the great ethical prophets, as an attempted embodiment of the principles of virtuous living. The nature of that law is

known to us all. Painful memories of our school days revive with the dietary, sanitary, and medical regulations of the imaginary Moses; the elaborate arrangements for worship, the paraphernalia of the Ark and the Temple, the innumerable *minutiæ* that regulated almost every waking moment of the Jew's life, and made the apostle positively groan as he thought about it. No wonder he was lyrical about the “freedom whereby Christ has set us free,” which swept away the entire body of meticulous legislation, recalling men to the first principles of prophetic, that is, ethical religion. Now, if I understand the new reformers, they advocate the adoption of Christ's theory. Better informed than Christ, they know that the “Law” is no more the work of Moses than of Melchisedeck; that it never saw the light before the seventh century; that even the Decalogue is not older than the eighth; that in a word, the *key* to the Old Testament is to be found in the indisputable fact that Amos, Hosea and Micah knew absolutely nothing of Moses and his legislation. They have, therefore, far less scruple than Christ in advocating its supersession. So far from being divine, it is not even Mosaic; it was the work, well-intentioned, and, no doubt, admirably adapted to the time, of the rebuilders of the Jewish State under Ezra and Nehemiah, during, and immediately after, the Captivity. Inspiration had died out in Israel: prophecy, that is, inspired preaching, was dead, and national salvation was sought in literature. Psalms or hymns were composed for the Temple worship; treatises like Koheleth, Proverbs, Job, Wisdom, and

the rest, began to be written: history appeared in Kings and Samuel, and then the lawyers had a turn; they compiled the Law, or Torah, aided by statesmen and priests, who succeeded in persuading the people it was Mosaic and therefore divine. But, beyond a few elements, traditionally associated with their great deliverer, there is nothing Mosaic about it, and the irrefutable proof of that statement is the absolute silence of the eighth century prophets about Moses, the legislator, not to speak of their own injunctions, obviously intended by them as *original* contributions to national legislation. The popular theory of both Jew and Gentile that the "Law" is 3,400 years old would simply stultify the pre-exilic prophets, and make Hebrew history an insoluble riddle.

Now, Mr. Montefiore knows this as well as any continental scholar: indeed I had the advantage some thirteen years ago of hearing him, as Hibbert lecturer, explain this cardinal factor in the evolution of his national religion. His race has no more competent student of Biblical Criticism, and therefore it is no surprise to find him advocating patiently and somewhat tentatively the abandonment of the "Law," as such, and a return to the Prophets. His radical attitude may be gauged when we find him favouring a change in the architecture of the Synagogue. There should, he thinks, be no further need of the Ark, or Box of the Covenant, containing the tables and the interminable scrolls of the Law, which, it is interesting to learn, Jews find just as tedious reading as Christians. If you must have a tabernacle, he says, then put the scrolls of

Isaiah, Amos and Hosea into it, for they are the veritable founders of religious Israel, and not the Law. That composite Code, the work of a joint Committee of the popular leaders, is nothing but an attempt to embody the broad principles of good living in a series of clear and hardfast enactments; and this policy seemed indispensably necessary to the reconstitution of the national life. Possibly it was; like hell-fire to people in the lower stages of civilization. Mankind has, no doubt, progressed by the help of fiction no less than by the way of truth. But, in the opinion of many modern Jews, the "Law" has become almost obsolete; it has a cramping effect on character, it tends to intensify that spiritual isolation of their people which in every respect is so undesirable; it is a source of much inconvenience, and generally so irksome that its obedience is becoming difficult almost to impossibility. Individuals favourably circumstanced may be able to obey it literally; to the mass of Israelites, it is become, forcibly, almost a dead letter.

Hence, the new Judaism would make a compendious end of all the dietary regulations of the spurious Moses—pork and rabbit and clean and unclean meats generally—and allow every man to eat his dinner undisturbed by any other consideration than that of his digestion. In the same way, the *Sabbath* is to go, that is, it is to lose its old ecclesiastical character, as a reminder of Jahveh's enforced rest after his six day's work on the Universe, or, as another inspired version of that deity's language has it, of his equally imaginary deliverance of Israel from their Egyptian captivity.

The new Ezras and Nehemiahs are perfectly well aware, though they do not publish their views in popular manuals, that the Sabbath is no Jewish institution at all ; that, like the Law, nothing whatever was known of it before the Babylonian captivity in the sixth century, B.C., that no pre-exilic prophet ever mentions it ; that, in fine, it is nothing but a foreign importation, like demonology and the dogma of the Future Life ; that the command to abstain from work in Jahveh's name is simply a revival of the Babylonian superstition that it was unlucky to do anything on Saturday, or Saturn's day.

And that other pillar of Jewish orthodoxy, the long-expected Messiah legend, is to be quietly dropped. No doubt, here as in other matters, Christian enlightenment has exerted much influence on Hebrew scholarship, and the messianic character of Christ having been abandoned (men like Martineau having refused to admit that the great reformer ever claimed to be the imaginary hero of national hopes) modern Jews have felt the impossibility of maintaining allegiance to a dream. Men of genius will still be born of their stock, messiahs like Spinoza, Heine, Beaconsfield, and Rothschild, leaders not only of their race, but of the world, but the consecrated embodiment of all wisdom, power, and holiness which a select providence was to provide for Israel's exclusive advantage ;—that is another of the shadows that is to vanish with the past.

And, of course, the fond delusion of the "chosen people" is to follow suit. Natural selection having been substituted for a tribal divinity, the new leaders recognise that the only "chosen people" are the fit—

the fit to survive ; and as unquestionably the Israelite is fit—otherwise he would not be here—he is, to that extent, of the number of the elect, preserved for some especial service which he is able to render to humanity. What that service is, in particular, it may be difficult to say, but any man who will consult the record of fame since the monstrous injustice and repression of Catholicism has given place to the light and freedom of a humanitarian age will find the surprising evidence of the wholly disproportionate contribution which the Jew has made to art, literature, politics, finance, to the general well-being and progress of the modern world. Like the French Protestants, who number less than 100,000 souls, they exert an influence—the eight millions of them—in the world, and in the main for good, far in excess of their numbers. They are temperate, industrious, patient, law-abiding, and clean lived. Their activities are not wholly centred on one department of life ; they have touched it at many points, and not a few they have adorned. Tradition denounces them for their greed and rapacity, their vulgar ostentation and love of gain. The envious and unsuccessful ascribe what they call the tyranny of capital to their machinations, and forget that the new and scientific Socialism, the only type that is abstractedly speaking, intelligible or respectable, is the creation of Marx and Lasalle, both Jews. The virtues of the Jews are their own ; their vices we have forced upon them. Certainly, it is a social phenomenon of the first magnitude that the ignorant, brutish, and odious treatment to which they have been subjected

throughout the middle ages, and well into modern times ; the wanton cruelty, persecution and extortion inflicted on them by zealots in the name of God and Christ, should have left them what we find them to-day—a nation, in spite of their eternal exile ; a people of unexhausted virility and resource, commanding a widespread influence, and with undiminished prospects of still further increasing it to the general good. It has been said that every nation deserves the Jews it gets. Precisely. Condemn the Jew to the money traffic by the preposterous laws of infallible Popes that one per cent. on a loan is a deadly sin, deserving of Jehovah's unquenchable wrath ; force the indispensably necessary means of exchange into the hands of this doomed race, deny them access to any career or profession, and what can be expected ? As the Spanish are said to have a genius for theology, since for centuries they have thought of little else, the Jews have forcibly been compelled to abandon their original calling of husbandry and take to shekels and money bags. They developed a genius for finance ; they created modern banking and initiated the system of credit on which modern business is based. Your Christians can't have it both ways. If they exclude the Jew from their Paradise, and force him into the money market by making it impossible for anybody who believes in hell to open a bank, they must expect to find their quondam slaves become their masters in an age in which theology does not count. No one succeeds at making the best of both worlds, and our Christian brethren now appear to regret their medieval

bargain, and would like to reverse the parts ; and so, unable to compulsorily expropriate and spoil the Jew, the common practice of Europe five or six centuries ago, they take to cowardly and hypocritical agitation, and goad the populace into those excesses, which are a fresh stigma on the Christian Church in Russia, Germany and France.

The Jew must certainly fill some good office in modern life, or he would not prosper as he does, where he has equal rights before the law ; and those countries that expelled him, or persecute him, would not be in the restless condition we observe. With the expulsion of the Jews, the Spaniards got rid of the enlightened and progressive element of the community ; the father of Spinoza was among the number : the Jews left the field to the theologians, and we know the result. England adopted a different policy. We have in this, as in other matters, taken the lead, and shown the nations how to make loyal subjects of an alien race and creed, and a very excellent bargain we have made, to put it on no higher grounds. We may not have secured the "chosen people," the Lord's elect and annointed. Our Jews are not saints to a man, and the taint of their traditional servitude makes itself painfully manifest in the way some of the lower classed employers of labour exploit the necessitous and poor, Jewish and Gentile. But the balance is on the right side, and undeniably at this moment the Jewish community is an element of national strength, not to speak of the good-will felt for England by their race abroad. We have treated the Jews justly, and we have got the Jews we deserve.

The reformers who recommend the abandonment of the flattering dogma of the "chosen people," are in some difficulty when they come to decide what is, then, Israel's especial position in the world ; what is their work or mission in life. They lay no stress on the national prosperity or influence so many of their people have attained ; but appear to be anxious to find some religious explanation or justification of their existence. If the Ruler of the Universe has not chosen them any more than Dutchmen as his favourites, can it be said that in the designs of Providence, *as they understand it*, they are intended to accomplish any definite task, to do any religious work. Mr. Montefiore can only offer a sort of conjecture, viz. : that they are reserved by heaven as witnesses for Theism, or the belief in God ; not as proselytisers, but as a silent and impressive testimony to the unity and unicity of the Divine Being. And, yet, it must not be understood that he advocates as the solitary object of Israel's separate existence a mere theological doctrine, or at best a philosophical thesis, an interpretation, one out of many, of the Reality disclosed in the phenomena of the Universe. To him, God and religion are inseparable terms, and apart from God he does not consider religion possible, or even conceivable. Not that the human mind can *know* the Eternal ; it can but "stretch forth lame hands of faith and faintly trust the larger hope" that there is Something or Someone, within the veil, with whom man may enter into personal and moral relations ; towards whom prayer, always of the higher or meditative type, may be directed, from whom

inspiration and encouragement may come. Though he nowhere expressly says so, I understand him to avow his belief in a personal Divinity, who in some way, he knows not how, made the world, selected Israel for an express religious work, not accomplished even yet, and enters into intimate relationship with the humble-minded who approach him. Truth he believes impossible apart from such an existence, and, what is really surprising in one so erudite and cultured, goodness also. Virtue, apart from "*some* Theistic metaphysic," "would be a mere earthly episode, a mere transitory chance." In a word, his philosophy and his morals depend on a vague and indefinable theory about the origin of things, so nebulous that he can only describe it as "*some* Theistic metaphysic."

Surely, this is perverted reasoning of the most pronounced type. For him the house of Wisdom is built on cloudland—"some metaphysic"—and on that unsubstantial foundation, about which we are as doubtful as the mystery of the Trinity, we are to erect the solid structure of truth and virtue, apart from which no ordered existence is conceivable. I should have thought truth and goodness were tolerably obvious to a child who had never heard of a world-theory and its indescribable perplexities. For Mr. Montefiore, Aristotle taught in vain that we must progress from the known to the less known, not *vice versa*; and he forgets the impossibility, as Kant has shown us, of associating goodness with the Unknown Reality until we have become acquainted with it in a human soul. And then, to add to our perplexities, the Evolutionists disclose at

state of things in the womb of the universe, so to speak, where the mighty structure was prepared, which confounds all our higher instincts, and simply staggers moral emotion. "Monstrously wicked" is the precise description our ethical critic, Mr. Mallock, thinks appropriate to the Author of the cosmic process. But if these things are so, in what sense do truth and goodness become inconceivable unless we set to work to achieve the impossible, *i.e.*, frame an answer to this insoluble riddle ; or, worse, unless we rest in a vague and intangible form of thought, described as "some theistic metaphysic." Mr. Montefiore is right in asserting That for which the popular name God is a more or less imperfect symbol : the Reality *is*, else phenomena would not disclose it. He is wrong when he contends we must ascribe to that Reality the attributes and characteristics of its phenominal manifestations ; and in particular, that morality, which is simply inconceivable in any being not conditioned as we are, creatures of flesh and blood, is also its essential attribute. In some wholly unintelligible way, all things great and wonderful are grounded in the unseen world ; but it is a paradox to assert that they are impossible until we recognise the fact. History affords no warrant for the theory, and the Japanese are a living refutation of it.

Whichever of the two great Jews be right, Jesus or Spinoza ; whether God be "our Father which is in heaven," or the Unique Substance, the only and everlasting Reality, which is all things, the unmistakable fact remains that morality is of the essence of things, like gravitation. *"La loi du monde matériel c'est*

l'équilibre; la loi du monde moral c'est la justice," is Victor Hugo's verdict. And it is my conviction that Israel's mission is to witness to this cardinal fact of Ethical Religion and not to popularize a theory about which agreement is rendered more improbable by every new discovery of science.

How can a venerable Creed, enshrined in a priceless literature, the mother of Faiths now greater and vaster than itself, hope for a future in witnessing to an obsolescent hypothesis about the world-mystery? I suggest the outlook before the new Hebraism is something more inspiring. They will help in the restoration, not of Jahveh of old, however reformed, but of that priceless ethical message of their eight century prophets, whom the reformers rightly regard as the genuine founders of their religion, whose scrolls Mr. Montefiore would substitute for the faded phylacteries of the Mosaic Law. Amos and Isaiah, the peasant and the peer, do indeed associate morality with Jahveh's sovereign will; but if that Divinity's name were erased from their parchments, the message is none the less impressive and true. These august decrees derive no sublimity from his alleged approval; it is the tribal god who is himself universalized through being at last identified with the world-wide faith of man in Virtue. I suggest to the liberals of Israel that their mission, their work assigned to them by the earthly providence, is to ally themselves with us and help forward the second reformation. Their own temple is falling; they deplore the defection of their children. While a remnant is bound inflexibly to an

obsolete creed and an impossible ideal, many are hypocritical conformists to the popular Christianity ; more are plunged in an abject and selfish materialism, and the overwhelming majority are apathetic and indifferent. There is no magic in the name of Jehovah to rouse this mass to a sense of Right and Duty, and any measure of success attained by this new crusade would only emphasize the isolation and religious sterility of their people.

A great and good Jew in America, Felix Adler, saw this, and the conviction ended in the founding of the Ethical Movement twenty years ago. His father was the Chief Rabbi of New York, and the reversion of his benefice was secured to his famous son. But he renounced the preferment ; he left the Synagogue, as we have left the Churches, because it had no message for him. For him it was the hour of the twilight of the gods, the oracles were dumb, the idols were overturned. Nothing remained but the broad breezy plains of humanity, and the eternal faith in Right for Right's own sake. We are of that fellowship here, true sons of the prophets of old, who have forgotten our creeds, as the liberal Jews have forgotten their Law, and look for salvation nowhere but in conduct. When social barriers are still further removed, and inter-marriage no longer discouraged, as it is by Mr. Montefiore, I confidently believe that Judaism will, like liberal Christianity on the one hand, and all forms of Rationalism, like Positivism and Secularism on the other, be gathered into one mighty Rationalist, Ethical and Religious Movement, which will found the veritable Church of Humanity.